

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 10285

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP, IS, JO, XF
SUBJECT: PROCEDURES FOR HIGH-LEVEL VISITS IN JERUSALEM

REF: A) JERUSALEM 1933, B) STATE 193255

1. WE APPRECIATE DELICACY OF SITUATION CREATED BY
PRECEDENT ESTABLISHED BY MONDALE EXCURSION TO THE
WESTERN WALL IN COMPANY OF MAYOR KOLLEK.

2. HOWEVER, IT IS WHOLLY UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT, GIVEN
POLITICAL PRESSURES BOTH IN THE U.S. AND IN ISRAEL,
THAT WE CAN MAKE STICK A POLICY OF HAVING HIGH-LEVEL
U.S. VISITOR AVOID THE WALL. WASHINGTON NEEDS NO
TUTELAGE ON THE ENORMOUS HISTORICAL AND EMOTIONAL
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WALL IN ISRAELI LIFE AND IN JEWISH
HISTORY. AMERICAN JEWS WILL NOT FORGET THAT THE VICE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES VISITED THE WALL, AND
THEY WILL CERTAINLY EXPECT FUTURE SENIOR U.S. VISITORS
TO DO THE SAME. EFFORTS BY US TO DISCOURAGE SUCH VISITS
WILL SURELY BECOME KNOWN IN ISRAEL AND THE U.S. VIA
PRESS LEAKS AND WILL INVITE POISONOUS CONCLUSIONS THAT
WASHINGTON IS BACKING AWAY FROM WHAT IS REGARDED AS A
POSITIVE SHIFT IN U.S. PRACTICE. ONE CAN ARGUE THAT
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 10285 111358Z

THE U.S. APPROACH WAS MORE APPEALING TO ARABS BEFORE
THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO THE WALL. BUT A MEMBRANE
WAS BROKEN ON JUNE 30 AND WE SHOULD NOT PRETEND OTHER-
WISE.

3. MOREOVER, WE NOW HAVE A PLAUSIBLE AND DEFENSIBLE
PRECEDENT WITH RESPECT TO VISITORS TO THE WESTERN WALL

OR TO OTHER PARTS OF THE OLD CITY SUCH AS THE CHRISTIAN SHRINES; I.E., PRIVATE VISITS IN THE COMPANY OF THE MAYOR OF JERUSALEM WHO IS A MUNICIPAL OFFICIAL, NOT A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. KOLLEK IS, AFTER ALL, RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTRATION OF EAST JERUSALEM--WHETHER ONE REGARDS IT AS OCCUPIED TERRITORY OR AS HAVING BEEN ANNEXED TO THE STATE OF ISRAEL. IF HE WANTS TO GO ALONG, WE CAN REASONABLY REGARD THE MAYOR'S ROLE AS LEGITIMATE UNDER THE FORMER INTERPRETATION--IF WE CHOOSE TO DO SO. AND WE CAN MAINTAIN OUR OWN LEGAL POSITION WITH REGARD TO THE STATUS OF EAST JERUSALEM SO LONG AS OUR CONSUL GENERAL ACCOMPANIES ALL HIGH-RANKING VISITORS AS WELL AND WE MAKE CLEAR WHEN ASKED THAT NO CHANGE IN OUR POLICY HAS OCCURRED.

4. WE HAVE NO ILLUSION THAT THIS WILL LONG SATISFY TEDDY KOLLEK. HE WILL KEEP PUSHING FOR FORMAL RECOGNITION AS THE MAYOR OF A UNIFIED JERUSALEM AND FOR "OFFICIAL" RATHER THAN "PRIVATE" VISITS. WE NEED NOT WORRY UNDULY ABOUT THIS, HOWEVER, FOR THE "MONDALE PRECEDENT" IS A LINE WE CAN DEFEND FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD. THERE WILL BE SOME PUBLIC RELATIONS COSTS HERE, BUT THEY WILL NOT BE EXHORBITANT.
LEWIS

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